Regional Strategic Plan for Public Access to Waterways in Hampton Roads

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Strategic Plan for Public Access to Water

- Public access to water has been a high priority at local, state, and federal levels
- Received grant from CZM
- The strategic plan will:
  - Serve as a resource for localities when planning new public access projects
  - Help guide prioritization for projects in the region

“Providing adequate public access...is important for quality of life, the economy, and for long-term conservation of the region’s treasured natural resources.”
- National Park Service
Goals of the Plan

1. Assess the demand for public access
2. Conduct public access sites inventory
3. Identify potential opportunities for expanding public access
4. Public outreach to promote existing network of sites with interactive map

Lavalette Ave. Kayak Launch & Fishing Pier in Norfolk on opening day – October 2017
Assessing Demand for Public Access

Hampton Roads has **1.7 million residents** and about **3,900 miles of shoreline**
2017 Hampton Roads Water-Based Activity Participation

- Sunbathing/relaxing at beach: 47%
- Viewing the water: 43%
- Swimming (open water): 35%
- Salt water fishing: 25%
- Fresh water fishing: 22%
- Canoeing/kayaking: 18%
- Power boating: 9%
- Paddleboarding: 8%
- Tubing on water: 7%
- Surfing: 6%
- Sailing/sail boarding: 5%
- Water skiing: 4%
- Jet ski/personal watercraft: 4%
- Other water-related activities: 3%

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR)
2017 Hampton Roads Most Needed Recreation Opportunities

- Parks: 56%
- Natural areas: 47%
- Water access: 43%
- Trails: 42%
- Historic areas: 42%
- Scenic drives: 28%
- Sports facilities: 21%

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR)
Approximately 21% of boats in Virginia are registered in Hampton Roads localities.

Total boats registered in Hampton Roads (FY16): 48,305

Approximately 13% of fishing licenses in Virginia purchased by Hampton Roads residents.

Total annual fishing licenses sold in Hampton Roads (FY16): 71,619

Source: VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries; FY16
Public Access Inventory

- **Boating Access**
  - Boat Ramps
  - Kayak Launches

- **Swimming Access**

- **Fishing Access**
  - Pier Fishing
  - Bank Fishing

- **Viewing Access**
  - Boardwalks
  - Observations Decks
  - Nature Trails
Types of Existing Public Access Sites

- **Boat Ramps**: 18%
- **Kayak/Canoe Launches**: 26%
- **Nature Trails**: 16%
- **Bank Fishing**: 14%
- **Fishing Piers**: 10%
- **Observation Decks**: 7%
- **Beach with Swimming**: 5%
- **Boardwalks**: 4%
Identifying Opportunities for Public Access Sites

Travel Time to Public Access Sites

Areas of Equal Travel Time
- 10 minutes
- 20 minutes
- 30 minutes
- Existing Water Access Sites

Chesapeake Bay
James River
Atlantic Ocean
Identifying Opportunities for Public Access Sites

Population & Public Access by Watershed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population per Access Site</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1,000</td>
<td>Light Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 3,000</td>
<td>Light Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 - 5,000</td>
<td>Medium Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 10,000</td>
<td>Dark Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 10,000</td>
<td>Dark Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Access</td>
<td>Gray</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Opportunities for Public Access Sites

Travel Distance Between Kayak Launches

Distance to next kayak launch:
- 5 - 10 miles
- 11 - 15 miles
- 16 - 20 miles
- > 20 miles

- Existing Kayak Launch
- Flowline
Identifying Opportunities for Public Access Sites

Visitor Activity Analysis

Visitor Activity by Home Grid for All Access Sites:
- Low
- High

Map showing visitor activity levels in different areas.
Findings

- High demand for public access to water
  - Visiting the beach is the most popular water-based activity
  - Hampton Roads has highest number in the state for fishing licenses/boat registrations
- Nearly 98% of residents live within 30-minute drive of the 192 public access sites
Findings

✓ Opportunities exist to fill in gaps to create a more connected network of public access

– Lack of public access sites
  • Some watersheds have no public access sites
  • Large distance between kayak/boat sites along some rivers

– Underserved areas with higher demand
  • Areas of dense population may not have enough public access sites
Potential Next Steps

• Additional analysis to refine gaps locally
• Conduct special studies for specific watersheds or waterbodies
• Develop tool for planners to evaluate and rank potential projects
• Inventory of shoreline public land ownership
• Investigate creating a public access authority
• Maintain/update inventory data
Public Outreach

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- FISHING PIERS
- KAYAK LAUNCHES
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- Location
- Access Type
Water Access Sites in Hampton Roads